



# PRESS RELEASE

## Internal Revenue Service - Criminal Investigation *Chief Richard Weber*

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IRS – Criminal Investigation

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### **Mo Money Tax Return Preparers Sentenced to Prison for Conspiracy to Defraud the United States and Filing False Tax Returns**

Two Memphis, Tennessee, area residents were sentenced to prison today for conspiring to defraud the United States and aiding and assisting in the preparation of false tax returns, announced Acting Assistant Attorney General Caroline D. Ciruolo of the Justice Department's Tax Division and U.S. Attorney Dana J. Boente of the Eastern District of Virginia.

Jeremy Blanchard, 35, and Erik Pittman, 35, both of Memphis, were sentenced to serve 70 and 33 months in prison, respectively, to be followed by three years and one year of supervised release, respectively. Blanchard and Pittman previously pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy to defraud the United States and one count of aiding and assisting in the preparation of false tax returns. The defendants were ordered to pay \$549,000 in restitution to the Internal Revenue Service (IRS).

"Mr. Blanchard and Mr. Pittman inflated the deductions and credits claimed on their clients' income tax returns to line their own pockets at the expense of the U.S. Treasury," said Acting Assistant Attorney General Ciruolo. "Taxpayers seeking assistance with their returns should expect and are entitled to honest and accurate advice and representation. When preparers seek to abuse our nation's tax system for their own personal gain, the department stands ready with its law enforcement partners to investigate, prosecute and hold the offenders accountable for their criminal conduct to the fullest extent of the law."

"While most tax return preparers provide excellent service to their clients, it only takes a few dishonest return preparers to give the industry a black eye," said Special Agent in Charge Thomas Jankowski of the IRS-Criminal Investigation's (CI) Washington, D.C., Field Office. "IRS-CI works year round to investigate dishonest return preparers and protect the American taxpayers' money. Return preparers must comply with the same tax obligations as the clients that they serve. No one is above the law."

According to court documents, Blanchard and Pittman were partners in a return preparation business, Mo Money Taxes, which operated three locations in the Richmond, Virginia, area. Blanchard, Pittman and others prepared numerous false tax returns for their customers for the 2011 tax year. Blanchard and Pittman admitted that they created and inflated fictitious and fraudulent tax credits, including the Earned Income Credit and the American Opportunity

Credit, to claim tax refunds that customers were not entitled to receive. Blanchard and Pittman admitted that their conduct caused a loss to the IRS of more than \$250,000, but less than \$550,000.

Another participant in this scheme, Corey Taylor, 25, of Richmond, was sentenced on March 22 to serve 20 months in prison for one count of conspiracy to defraud the United States and one count of aiding and assisting in the preparation of a false tax return.

Acting Assistant Attorney General Ciraolo and U.S. Attorney Boente thanked special agents of IRS-CI, the FBI and the U.S. Postal Inspection Service, who investigated the case, and Trial Attorneys Kevin F. Sweeney and Todd P. Kostyshak of the Tax Division and Assistant U.S. Attorney Stephen Miller of the Eastern District of Virginia, who prosecuted the case.

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